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ABSTRACT

This theme issue of a Texas journal focuses on gifted education and culturally diverse students. "Recruiting and Retaining Diverse Students in Gifted Education" (Donna Y. Ford and J. John Harris) discusses the challenges of recruiting diverse students in gifted education and presents solutions, including using different measurements of intelligence, moving away from identification to assessment, using a range of scores and group norms, and considering non-cognitive factors. Recommendations are also made for retaining minority students in gifted programs. "Hispanic and Gifted/Talented: Can You Be Both?" (Rebecca V. Rendon) provides information on the assessment of bilingual children, characteristics of culturally diverse students, and curricular and program strategies. "The Education of a Gifted Non-English Speaking Immigrant" (Becky Alanis) describes a monolingual Spanish-speaking student's experience in a gifted program. "Discovering and Nurturing Talents in Young Hispanic Students" (Marta Mountjoy) discusses the use of different assessment measures to identify gifted Hispanic students and the development of a summer enrichment program for bilingual gifted students in a culturally diverse school district. In "Alternate Identification for Gifted African-Americans" by Donna Ashby, alternative testing procedures to identify more gifted minority students are described. Articles include references. (CR)

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TEXAS ASSOCIATION FOR THE GIFTED AND TALENTED
Member, National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)

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CULTURAL DIVERSITY: CHALLENGES FOR GIFTED EDUCATION

RECRUITING AND RETAINING DIVERSE STUDENTS IN GIFTED EDUCATION: PITFALLS AND PROMISES

Donna Y. Ford, Ph.D.
The University of Virginia

J. John Harris III, Ph.D.
The University of Kentucky

How can we get more Black, Native American, and Hispanic students into our gifted programs? This concern and related questions are quite legitimate given the demographics of gifted programs nationally. The most recent report on the status of gifted education showed that minority students are under-represented by at least 50% (USDE, 1993). In this article, we broaden the question to examine keeping minority students in our gifted programs. In essence, after minority students have been identified and placed (i.e., recruited), what support services are available to ensure their success and continuation in the program (i.e., retention)?

Deep feelings are aroused when discussions based on differences are raised. In gifted education, we constantly defend the rights of gifted students to receive an education that meets their differential and individual needs. Opponents of gifted education hurl accusations of elitism, while proponents call for curricular differentiation of many kinds (e.g., acceleration, enrichment). Similarly, proponents of multicultural education seek interventions that meet individual children's needs. Unfortunately, the relationship and support between multicultural education and gifted education is weak, despite having similar goals. The two movements must not be mutually exclusive, for both seek equity and excellence. Throughout this article, we maintain that the successful recruitment and retention of minority students in gifted education rests heavily on providing students with an education that is multicultural.

Recruitment -- Problems and Solutions

Many efforts are underway to increase the representation of minority students in gifted programs. Recommendations frequently emphasize finding alternative ways (more reliable and more valid methods and procedures) to identify gifted minority students. What barriers inhibit the identification and placement of minority students in our gifted programs? The following section presents problems and promises in the identification process.

(See FORD and HARRIS, pg. 8)

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Mary Seay

CELEBRATE MISTAKES

Mistakes are what drive the mind and spirit. They are the energy which lets you know when you have finally overcome the obstacles and have learned something new. They keep us moving toward the pots of gold at the end of our own special rainbows.

There's a story in *Chicken Soup* about Thomas Edison. A young reporter was asking him how many times he had failed before he found the right type of wire for the electric light globe. He replied that he never did fail, but he did find 1,235 things that did not work.

Mistakes are experiences to celebrate as long as we are not taught to believe that they are failures.

If we can believe in the wisdom of mistakes, then there will be no such thing as failures; there will only be tries until we are successful. There will only be the experience of having missed the target on this particular effort.

It is an intriguing idea that we should set ourselves up as judges of what a child has learned in our classrooms this year; especially since the child who is making no mistakes very possibly came to us with enough knowledge about the target information that her brain has done very minimal novel neural firing. Compare her learning energy with the child who came knowing nothing about the subject at hand, and explosion after explosion of learning has occurred, yet this youngster will have made many mistakes along the learning path; and, therefore, receive a poor grade because we grade children on their learning trails and not on their final successes.

I have always thought the grading system is somehow backwards. Instead of my trying to figure out what the child has learned, that child should be giving me grades on how excited I had helped him become about learning, on how much curiosity I had stimulated and on how many different subjects, on how well I had understood that child and her style and her temperament and the differences in the way she and I think—or maybe the similarities—or my own wonder at

(see SEAY, pg. 5)

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The Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented (TAGT) is a non-profit organization of parents and professionals promoting appropriate education for gifted and talented students in the State of Texas.

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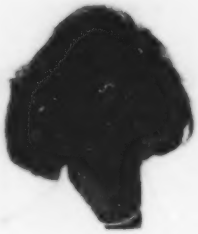

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION APPROVES CHANGES IN G/T RULES

Changes to G/T Rules at First Reading
On February 16, the State Board of Education (SBOE) approved at first reading rules for Chapter 89, Subchapter A, Gifted and Talented Education. Several changes recommended by TAGT were made to the rules as printed in the winter issue of *Tempo*. Rule changes approved by the State Board follow: (italics indicate changes.)

89.1 Student Assessment
School districts shall develop written policies on student identification that are approved by the local board of trustees and disseminated to parents. The policies must:

(1) include provisions for ongoing screening and selection of students who perform or show potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment in the areas defined in *the Texas Education Code*, 29.121.

(3) include data and procedures designed to *ensure that students from all populations in the district have access to services designed to identify gifted students.*

No changes to provisions (2), (4), and (5).

89.2 Professional Development
School districts shall ensure that:
(1) *teachers who provide instruction and services that are part of the program for gifted students* have a minimum of 30 hours of staff development that includes nature and needs of gifted/talented students, assessing student needs, and curriculum and instruction for gifted students.

2) *teachers who provide instruction and services that are part of the program for gifted students* receive a minimum of six hours annually of professional development in gifted education; and

(3) administrators *and counselors who have authority for program decisions* have a minimum of six hours of professional development that includes nature and needs of gifted/talented students and program options.

89.3 Student Services
School districts shall provide an array of learning opportunities for gifted/talented students *in kindergarten through grade 12* and shall inform parents of the opportunities. Options must include:

(3) in-school and, *when possible,* out-of-school options relevant to the student's area of strength that are available during the entire school year.

No changes to provisions (1), (2), and (4).

89.4 Fiscal Responsibility
(No change)

89.5 Program Accountability
(No change)

The SBOE met on March 26 to discuss public comments received on Chapters 74, 76, and 89. Chapter 89 containing the rules for gifted and talented education will be on the May 16 State Board agenda for second reading and final adoption.

Senate Bill 1 and Legislative Intent
Determining "legislative intent" behind Education Code revisions from Senate Bill 1 (SB1) was the subject of a meeting February 20 between SB1 co-authors Senator Bill Ratliff, Representative Paul Sadler, and TEA leadership. Following are interpretations impacting gifted and talented education:

• ***No Pass/No Play Exempted Courses***
Responding to a TEA inquiry, Sadler and Ratliff said that SB1 *does* authorize the SBOE to designate advanced and honors courses for which students would be exempted under no pass/no play. Courses eligible for the no pass/no play exemption can also be determined *locally* based on the essential elements.

• ***Credit by Exam***
Sadler and Ratliff stated that the legislature intended only *one test* to be used for credit by examination, *not two*, and that ISDs *may not* charge students for credit by examination fees.

• ***Criteria, Policies, Rules***
SB1 directs the SBOE to develop *criteria* for gifted and talented programs, but does not direct the board specifically to develop *rules*. To clarify any confusion on this matter, Sadler and Ratliff said that criteria, standards, procedures, policies or requirements *are* as binding as rules.

• ***Grading Standards***
SB1 does *not* give the SBOE the authority to set minimum grading standards. The old Education Code had set a 70-out-of-100 minimum grading standard for course completion and promotion. School districts, not the SBOE, are authorized to set local grading standards.

House Public Education Committee Chair Plans Statewide Meetings

The House Public Education Committee met recently to discuss the charges given to them by the Speaker of the House. The committee's top priority will be to monitor the implementation of SB1. Beginning in March, the committee plans to travel around the state visiting a different city each month. Sadler wants the committee to visit schools and observe classrooms on Friday and conclude the visit with a public hearing on Saturday. Chairman Sadler believes this procedure will show the ways SB1 is working or not working in schools across Texas. TAGT members are encouraged to attend these meetings and to let the committee know how SB1 is faring in their community.

Javits Program Administrator Position Saved

NAGC has informed state organizations that the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) has posted the position for Administrator of the Javits Gifted and Talented Program. Much of the credit for saving this important national office for gifted and talented education goes to TAGT members who contacted their Washington congressmen. Contact Gizelle Young at 202/ 219-1930 or by fax, 202/219-2106 at the U.S. Department of Education for information about the position. The Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Program announcement from NAGC is located in Spreadsheet.

Association News

Meet Jean Gallagher who on March 4 joined the TAGT headquarters office team. Jean, working with Trey Watters in membership services, was greeted her first day on the job with 400+ scholarship applications to process. Jean brings more than ten years experience in association work to the TAGT team, having worked previously at the Capital Area Arthritis Foundation, the South Central Association of Blood Banks, and the American Medical Association. We are very pleased to have Jean in the headquarters office!

Winners Announced in TAGT Recruitment Drive

TAGT recently conducted a *New Member All-Region Recruitment Drive* from August to November, 1995. The results far-surpassed our goal, taking the current membership to 8,136. TAGT's strength and effectiveness as a state advocacy group is a strong, active, and growing membership.

The following individuals are recognized for their special recruitment efforts: Karen Fitzgerald, Spring Branch ISD; TAGT Region IV Director, enrolled 52 new members. Karen has won a roundtrip airline ticket from Southwest Airlines for anywhere in the Continental United States the airline flies. Dr. Peggy Kress, Round Rock ISD, enrolled 37 new members. Peggy also won a roundtrip airline ticket from Southwest Airlines for anywhere in the Continental United States the airline flies. Elizabeth Montes, El Paso ISD, enrolled 32 new members. Elizabeth won a 1996 TAGT annual conference registration and three nights hotel accommodations for the conference. Debra Midkiff, Grand Prairie ISD, enrolled 30 new members. Debra has a won a 1996 TAGT annual conference registration and three nights hotel accommodations for the conference, and Madeleine Bullock, Pasodale Middle School, Ysleta ISD, has won a 1996 TAGT annual conference registration and ticket to the Membership Luncheon and Awards Ceremony.

TAGT members recruiting more than ten new members have won a one-year extension to their current TAGT membership or may give the award to another individual or family. Winners are: Barbara Miller, T.H. Rogers Elementary and Middle Schools, Houston ISD; Nellie Jordan, John Neely Bryan Elementary School, Dallas ISD; Chris Johnson, Lake Travis Primary School, Lake Travis ISD; Dr. Michael Sayler, University of North Texas; Jane Burroughs,

(See EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE, pg. 6)

SEAY, from pg. 2

the majesty of knowledge and my respect for life, both mine and hers, on how well I adapted to her learning modes and how I accommodated to her cognitive need.

The customer should be the one filling in the customer-satisfaction card, and not me, the teacher, filling in the teacher-satisfaction card.

Many programs for the gifted give gifted children grades. Divining what learning has taken place and separating it from what she already knew when she entered my classroom, brings to mind a haystack half full of needles, and I am to separate the needles and weigh them to see how sharp she was when she came into my classroom. And I guess the hay is the roughage that I feed her to keep her a regular student.

If having our gifted children grading their teachers sounds like too anarchic an idea, here's another suggestion:

Today we give a ceiling grade of what we perceive children know and we have a string of letters to indicate to what degree they are not meeting our little window of excellence, or of failure. It might be just the opposite. We should have just one grade, say "A," to indicate what they knew when they came in, and if they got the "A" on the report, it would mean that they didn't learn anything that they didn't already know. Then we would need a long string of alphabet showing exactly how much they have really added to their store of knowledge for the time period. So, if the child got an "L," we would have honestly taught them a lot. The way it is today, many children at the primary levels come in reading, and we spend a year teaching them "pre-reading skills." Maybe there should be an "-A" for when we subtract from their store of knowledge.

I am prompted to write these words because there are two kindergarten children in my district targeted for "failure" this school year who are identified as gifted children. What this seems to be saying is that we have not been paying enough attention to whether the mistakes the child makes are the kind that are moving him in the right direction, or whether we should be intervening in the mistake-making process to redirect the child's course.

Some very sound research on the kind of mistakes which lead to school failure is shudderingly chilling. Failing a child in school is a mistake in the wrong direction, according to Melissa Roderick, as reported in the December, 1995, Research Bulletin for Phi Delta Kappa. She writes that the proportion of students who are overage for grade by the time they reach high school has risen nearly 40% over the past two decades. Citing data that demonstrated many teachers believe that retention, particularly in the early grades, is an effective strategy to remediate poor school performance. Roderick goes on to conclude that repeating a grade provides few remediational benefits and, in the long run, places students at a higher risk of dropping out of school. The permanency of retention and the message it sends students have long term effects on self-esteem and school attachment that may override even short-term academic benefits, even when the retained students receive special services. Sophomore students who had repeated at least one previous grade dropped out at more than twice the rate of youths of similar reading levels who reported that they had never repeated a grade.

In a study of teachers' attitudes about grade retention conducted by Ellen Tomchin and James Impara, teachers often believed that early grade retentions give immature kindergartners through third graders a chance to catch up and have few negative impacts on self-esteem. Teachers overestimate the potential for benefits in early grade retention and seriously underestimate the enormous impact on the child's self-image and feelings of self-worth. The child perceives it as failure and a form of punishment which results in a stigma or mark of disgrace, and indelible stain on his or her reputation.

Qualitative studies often conclude that retention exacerbates disengagement from school and leads to increases in frustration. This is probably nowhere more obvious than in gifted students. Fragile to begin with, their personal esteems take failure seriously. Often a gifted child is given failing marks by the teacher for not completing homework. Some gifted students do not understand the need to do (what is for them) excessive amounts of homework because, "I see that I understand how to do this in 5 problems. Why should I have to do another 20?" Why, indeed. Is it because that I, the teacher, do need to work 25 problems and find it too restive an idea that Sue-Sue doesn't? There are students at the middle school level who receive failing grades for coloring; their map pencil strokes are not all going the same direction.

A recent article on grade reduction for behavior raises the question of whether a grade for academic performance is a grade for academic performance if

someone takes off points for behavior, or for losing the book. One student whose grades averaged 99 in a history class was given a "F" because the teacher deducted five points for every time she did not bring her textbook to class. There is something wrong with this picture.

Does it bother you that we have trained our children that making high grades and not making mistakes is more important than the fact that they are not learning much that is new or novel to them?

In life outside school we usually get as many tries as we need to work out the solution to a problem. It is tragic when a child stops trying to do something that he was not good at the first time he tried it.

We cannot celebrate mistakes if we never want children to make any.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE, from pg. 4

Barbers Hill Middle School, Barbers Hill ISD; and Tillie Hickman, Odom Academy, Beaumont ISD.

Many thanks to all of you who participated in TAGT's *New Member All-Region Recruitment Drive*, helping raise the membership bar to an exciting new level.

Top Ten Silly Myths About G/T Coordinators

Karen M. Fitzgerald
Spring Branch ISD

10. G/T Coordinators don't do anything.
9. G/T Coordinators don't let *anyone* in the gifted program.
8. G/T Coordinators let *everyone* in the gifted program, except my child.
7. G/T Coordinators have never spent a day in a classroom.
6. G/T coordinators never answer their phone messages.
5. G/T coordinators are required to have painted nails.
4. G/T coordinators are grossly overpaid.
3. G/T Coordinators always side with the parents.
2. G/T Coordinators sound like a "broken record" when they discuss gifted students.
1. G/T Coordinators spend a lot of time out of the district at meetings.

GIFTED AND TALENTED ADVOCACY THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS

Ernesto Bernal, Ph.D.
Arizona State University

The Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented continues to grow because of the enthusiasm with which gifted educators meet the challenge of supporting and conducting education for the gifted. However, if we want gifted education to thrive in this state, educators must become advocates for their local programs.

We have great opportunities right now to ensure continued support for gifted education. Texas has a new, but controversial, financial allocation system. One positive outcome of the new system could be the expansion of gifted programs. On the other hand, the Texas Education Agency is downsizing and there is the danger the agency's role in supporting gifted education could diminish.

As gifted education advocates, we face certain challenges. Some individuals are attempting to narrowly define giftedness. If successful, they would reduce the number of children eligible for our programs, especially children in non-dominant ethnic groups. The related threat of exclusivity in many gifted programs is another challenge. Only a few gifted programs have effective outreach to minority students and other gifted, but special, populations. We maintain barriers to entrance by insisting upon using a system of identification that seems more concerned with maintaining the prestige of the gifted label than with delivering a program for gifted and talented.

Another challenge in many local education agencies is excessive concern over teaching the "basics". These districts are overly committing their financial resources to that end, including money that used to go to gifted and talented programs.

How can gifted educators meet these challenges? First, educate your fellow professionals. Don't preach to them, just help them understand that the purpose of gifted and talented education is not exclusivity. Explain that we want to find *all* the children who are very able learners and help them become gifted adults.

Then give credibility to your claim of not being elitist by providing opportunities to a more diverse set of children to participate in your programs. Invite teachers on your campus to brainstorm effective ways of nominating and selecting children who are bright but haven't been selected for gifted education. Those who insist on identifying gifted children sometimes get things confused and standardized test scores becomes the only or ultimate criterion. Our task is selecting students not identifying the "one and only " gifted child. "Identification" is a status gate, where too many in gifted education justify allocation of special opportunities and limited resources to a very few able learners.

Next, let people see you at work, in your classrooms and curricular meetings. Too many people think that gifted and talented teachers don't have much to do, that since we have the "cream of the crop," our work is easy. So bring in your fellow professionals. Invite them to watch you teach a lesson, and then invite them to teach one - to select any topic, prepare a lesson that addresses multiple content objectives and levels of thought, and then come teach it while you take over their classes.

As we broaden our talent pool, we must up-date and re-design our curricula, making it more modern and more responsive to the characteristics of this broadened pool. We need not compromise our rigor or expectations, but we must become more thematic, cross-disciplinary, and sensitive to the varying cognitive styles of females and minorities. Gifted and talented curriculum must promote creativity and risk-taking. Our children must learn to behave a little bit like the gifted adults we want them to be.

To ensure the future of gifted education, we must eliminate so-called "compensatory " gifted education for minorities and institute instead programs that deal with the culturally different from where they are and educate them from that point. To do this would require that we expand our own ranks by recruiting, training, and certifying teachers from other fields (bilingual, for example) and get them to the point where they become fully certified teachers of the gifted. This will allow us to simultaneously provide appropriate education to special populations while expanding the offerings to the remainder of the gifted. For example, a team of bilingual teachers who are appropriately trained in gifted education could teach all our children to be bilingual.

(See BERNAL, pg. 12)

FORD and HARRIS, from pg.1

Problem: Psychometric Definitions and Theories of Giftedness.

Most definitions and theories of giftedness are grounded in psychometrics. Thus, we rely heavily or exclusively on tests of intelligence and achievement to decide who is gifted. Little attention is given to those abilities difficult to measure by standardized instruments. Further, given that minority students often score poorly on traditional intelligence and achievement tests, they are unlikely to be identified as gifted. Standardized tests can serve as gatekeepers; minority students are frequently placed at a disadvantage because their abilities are neither identified nor served.

Solution: Contemporary Theories and Definitions of Giftedness.

Gardner's (1983) and Sternberg's (1985) theories hold that intelligence (e.g., creativity, interpersonal intelligence) cannot be adequately measured by traditional means. They also support the notion that gifted students must be assessed within a contextual framework that considers their cultural and ethnic background, and the quality and quantity of their learning opportunities. Adopting broader definitions and theories will increase the likelihood of having identification practices that are inclusive rather than exclusive.

Solution: Move From Identification to Assessment.

Identification confirms one's perception that a child needs special services, while assessment gives more specific information on the areas in which the child is gifted, as well as their strengths and shortcomings. Given these important distinctions, we must move from a testing culture to an assessment culture. In a culture of assessment, comprehensive information is gathered from parents, teachers, and students themselves, and all information is deemed useful to placement decisions. Numerous options exist for assessing minority students for placement in gifted programs; the most promising practices rely on multidimensional and multimodal assessment strategies (Harris & Ford, 1991).

Problem: Invalid and Unreliable Use of Instruments.

Arguments against using standardized tests with minority students have proliferated in recent years on the grounds that minority students are assessed by tests that do not reliably measure intelligence and achievement for their particular group. The tests only indicate how reliable the results for the groups upon which reliability was initially established. Specifically, because the life experiences and educational opportunities between minority and White students vary considerably. We should question the reliability and validity of these tests when used with minority students..

Solution: Select Instruments Carefully.

We must consider the purpose of the instrument, it's validity and reliability, the target population, and the limitations of the instrument itself (Hansen and Linden, 1990). Similarly, we need to use nomination forms and checklists for parents that are sensitive to all reading and educational levels. They must include specific examples and descriptors of how the characteristics are exhibited by minority students. It is recommended that teachers and parents complete the same checklists so that the selection committee or decision makers can explore consistencies or discrepancies in the responses of parents and teachers.

Problem: Reliance on Arbitrary Cut-Off Scores.

The decision to accept students into gifted programs based on a predetermined cut-off score is commonplace, yet there is little consensus on what that score should be. The rationale for these cut-offs is often unclear, and there is often little flexibility in interpreting scores. We can think of numerous instances when Black students were not admitted to a program because they had missed a cut-off by one point.

Solution: Use a Range of Scores and Group Norms .

All tests and ratings have measurement errors. These errors require that a range of scores be considered. Thus, while the district's cut-off score may be an IQ of 130, schools should accept students whose scores are within the range based on measurement errors; for example, accept scores of 124 or higher. Specific group norms should also be adopted. Many standardized tests have norms specifically for minority students. As the 1993 federal definition of gifted states, gifted students should be compared to their economic, as well as cultural and racial peers.

Problem: Reliance on Composite Scores.

The use of composite or global scores can hide the abilities, strengths, and achievements of students. For instance, a composite IQ score of 120 can be calculated in various ways: a non-verbal score of 100 and a verbal score of 140 or both non-verbal and verbal scores of 120. The same problem arises when subscale scores on an achievement test are combined. The use of an overall mean score makes it

nearly impossible to develop appropriate programming for individual students; and it treats students receiving the same scores as if they are homogeneous.

Solution: Reliance on Subscale Scores.

Observations of subscale scores permit educators to develop profiles of students' strengths and weaknesses. With these data, schools can develop diagnostic and prescriptive means for meeting students' needs in specific areas. Schools, in essence, would recognize the heterogeneity of gifted students.

Problem: Reliance on Most Recent Test Performance.

Placement in gifted programs is often based on the child's most recent test and school performance data. An examination of early scores for minority students is important given that their test scores tend to *decrease* the longer they are in school (Ford, 1995, in press-b).

Solution: Consideration of Past Records.

By examining early school records, teachers can see indicators of potential and giftedness in the comments of parents and former teachers, and sometimes in test scores and grades. They can also look for descrepancies between subtest scores, and discrepancies between tests. Teachers can use records to recognize underachievement and determine whether it is subject-specific, global, situational, chronic, temporary, or teacher or peer related.

Problem: Inattention to Non-Cognitive Factors.

Many factors affect students' performance in evaluative situations. Most test manuals, including that of the WISC-III, caution test administrators to seriously consider such non-cognitive variables as health, motivation, and learning style in the testing and interpretation process.

Solution: Consideration of Non-Cognitive Factors.

Attention to motivation, school attitudes, test anxiety, self-perceptions, learning styles, and health promise to further our understanding of the responses of gifted minority students. If testing conditions are not optimal, test results must be interpreted with caution, and the decisions based on the results must be made carefully.

Problem: Heavy Reliance on Teacher Referral.

Teacher expectations, as influenced by their values and beliefs, significantly influence their decisions, including referrals. The practice of using teachers as primary identifiers of gifted learners carries numerous implications for the recruitment and retention of minority students, particularly as many teachers are not substantively prepared in gifted and multi-cultural education. This lack of preparation and experience decreases the probability that gifted minority students will be identified and placed.

Solution: Teacher Preparation in Gifted Education.

Teachers who hold stereotypes about gifted students as well-behaved and academically successful are unlikely to refer gifted underachieving students and those students who are currently misbehaving. Training in gifted education can increase teachers' understanding, awareness, and competence in recognizing gifted behaviors.

Problem: Lack of Attention to Cultural Differences in Learning.

When students are culturally different from ourselves, it is difficult to recognize their strengths. (It is easy, however, to recognize their weaknesses!) When cultures clash, teachers may not refer minority students who have different learning styles than gifted White students. Minority students often have learning styles similar to those of underachievers: concrete, holistic, field-dependent, social, tactile and kinesthetic learners (Ford, in press-b). Gifted nonminority students tend to be abstract, field-independent, and self-oriented learners (e.g., Dunn & Price 1980).

Solution: Pay Attention to Cultural Manifestations of Giftedness.

Gifted minority students share many of the strengths of gifted students in general. They retain and recall information well, enjoy complex problems, can tolerate ambiguity, are creative, extremely curious, perceptive, evaluative and judgmental, and interested in adult and social problems. To better understand and appreciate the strengths of minority students, educators must get to know them as cultural beings and individuals with strengths and potential.

Solution: Multicultural Training for Teachers.

To be successful in school and life, gifted minority students have been required to be bicultural, bicognitive, and bidialectic. These skills are not choices; they are prerequisites to school success. Unlike gifted minority students, teachers are seldom required to take on this arduous task. Preparation which focuses on individual differences attributable to race, gender, socio-economic status (SES), and geographic locale must be infused throughout preservice and graduate curriculum, including courses in gifted education.

Solution: Comprehensive Counseling Services and Trained Personnel .

Training is required for school counselors and psychologists to work effectively with the gifted student population; a significant portion of this preparation should be in multicultural counseling. Gifted minority students need socio-emotional support. Counseling strategies must address the following difficulties: identity both as gifted and minority, peer pressures and relations, feelings of isolation from both classmates and teachers, and sensitivity about feeling different as one of a few minority students in the gifted program. Inevitably, counselors must help gifted minority students be bicultural; help them to live and learn in two different cultures (Ford, Harris, & Schuerger, 1993).

Problem: Narrow Definitions of Underachievement.

Numerous definitions of underachievement exist, with most reflecting a discrepancy between (a) a standardized measure and actual school performance or (b) achievement and intelligence test scores. By implication, these definitions ignore the fact that many gifted and minority students do not necessarily perform optimally on standardized instruments.

Solution: Broader and Contextual Definitions of Underachievement.

Educators must use quantitative and qualitative indices to more effectively identify and better understand underachievement. For instance, underachievement should be analyzed relative to locus of control, fears and anxieties, self-concept, self-esteem, and motivation and effort. Educators should consider the influence of peer pressure on achievement and effort, explore underachievement in the context of the influences of overt discrimination and low teacher expectations, examine psychological or affective issues such as fears and anxieties, and observe cultural barriers to achievement such as home and community values that differ from school values (e.g., Fordham, 1988; Lindstrom & Van Sant, 1986).

Focus on the Potentially Gifted.

The emphasis on potential represents a progressive, future-oriented definition by denoting students' capacity to become critically acclaimed performers or exemplary producers of ideas in spheres of activity that enhance the moral, physical, emotional, social, intellectual, or aesthetic life of humanity (Tannenbaum, 1983). The most recent federal definition of giftedness (USDE, 1993) recognizes a broad range of ability and specifically mentions that no racial, ethnic, or SES group has a monopoly on giftedness. Renzulli's (1987) talent pool approach broadens the notion of ability and recognizes that some students face barriers to talent development. Talent pools acknowledge that lower test scores do not automatically equal lower intelligence or ability; many talents are resistent to formal testing.

Placement Considerations

It is not an easy decision for some minority students to enter gifted programs that are predominantly White and middle class. They may have to make significant personal, family, and social adjustments. Many may come from schools and communities in which they were the majority; in many gifted programs, they represent a distinct minority.

It is important to examine the type and location of program or services (e.g, acceleration, enrichment, resource room, etc). For example, some minority gifted learners feel uncomfortable in pullout programs where they are transported to a different school. This type of program may contribute to or exacerbate negative pressures from peers; that is, peers may be curious but envious over the special attention given to the child.

Minority students who feel social estrangement are likelier to experience both fright and flight from gifted programs. Interviews with students and their families about such concerns and other potential problems would be helpful in ensuring a successful placement.

We must gather as much information as possible on students' shortcomings in basic skills and learning style preferences when making placement decisions. Gifted minority students who lack basic skills will continuously play catch up and keep up when placed in a gifted program. Ideally, we must make all efforts to place gifted minority students with teachers who are effective in accommodating diverse learning styles and skill levels in the classroom.

Recommendations for the Retention of Minority Students in Gifted Programs

It is necessary that multicultural education be more completely integrated into curriculum in order to retain minortiy students in our gifted programs. A minority history month each February provides insufficient time to infuse minority students with pride in their racial and cultural heritage and the contributions of their ancestors to American history. Essentially, multicultural education for the gifted promotes mutual respect and understanding, comradeship, collegiality, and social and cultural awareness and understanding (see Ford, in press-a, for a more detailed discussion of multicultural gifted education)

In addition, more minority teachers must be recruited into gifted programs. The percentage of minority teachers is expected to decline from 12% to 5% (Education Commission of the States, 1989). These demographic projections indicate an inverse relationship between the number of minority students and minority teachers. The number of minority teachers in gifted programs has not received much attention in the literature. It is very likely that gifted minority students can go through their entire formal schooling without having a single minority teacher. This shortage of minority teachers translates into fewer role models and mentors for gifted minority and nonminority students.

Increased family involvement is also necessary to help keep gifted minority students in gifted programs. Substantive family involvement results in increased achievement and when parents are substantively involved, the likelihood of recruiting and retaining gifted minority students increases. Parents also play a major role in developing giftedness in their children, particularly those parents who are actively involved in their children's education (Bloom, 1985). We also must involve other family members in the educational process. Research indicates that minority students are more likely than other students to live in extended family situations. Grandmothers and other relatives can contribute positivley to a minority student's education (Ford, 1993).

Finally, schools need to provide a healthy organizational climate, one that is conducive to optimal personal-social and academic learning (Childers and Fairman, 1986). Minority gifted children will feel more comfortable, experience greater self-worth and, consequently, take more risks when the environment provides them with a feeling of significance, a sense of competence, and a belief that they have some control over important aspects of the environment. When gifted minority students are exposed to teachers who are empathetic, accepting, understanding, and genuine, and who foster a "curriculum of caring", teachers can expect gains in minority students' academic achievement and self-concept, as well as increased intrinsic motivation, attendance and class participation, and decreased feelings of alienation.

Developing Student Persistence

Once minority students have been recruited, the job has just begun. The task now becomes one of keeping minority students interested in and committed to the gifted program. Some strategies related to persistence are presented below.

Set clear expectations for students.

When our goals and expectations are clear, gifted minority students are likely to persist and succeed in the gifted program.

Enhance students' school competencies.

Self-understanding and self-awareness are important for success. Teachers and counselors should help gifted minority students gain a better understanding of their learning styles, area(s) of giftedness, as well as strengths and shortcomings. Educators must also take active and early actions to prevent or reverse underachievement.

Establish affinity support groups.

These groups include students who are assigned to a mentor (e.g., teacher, advisor) and whose members provide mutual support, and a sense of responsibility for the success of other members.

Provide comprehensive and continuous services.

Educators are encouraged to empower gifted minority students to feel that destiny is on their side, and that they are the future. Career and vocational guidance can provide students with practical experiences that enhance or sustain students' vision of the future. Mentorships and internships, in particular, provide opportunities for gifted minority students to see success in action. Personal guidance and counseling are also needed to help those minority students experiencing personal and interpersonal difficulties. Family, individual, and group counseling can be utilized to address the personal and interpersonal needs of gifted minority students. Academic guidance and counseling related to improving students' academic competencies is also needed, including tutoring, remediation, enrichment, and basic academic skills training.

A Final Word

Our efforts to identify and place minority students in gifted programs have increased in recent years. However, more concerted efforts must be aimed at the retention of these students once placed. In this way, we ensure that minority youth experience a sense of ownership and inclusion within the programs offered gifted students.

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BERNAL, from pg. 7

Sometimes, it seems we forget the ultimate purpose of gifted and talented programs is to find and educate the children who have the potential to become gifted adults. Children can be very bright without us. But that they have the commitment, the long-term motivation to succeed in doing things that are difficult to do, that is the job of the gifted program. Gifted education is about producing adults who are gifted, who are in the habit of being creative and taking intelligent risks.

It's time that we as educators of the gifted reach down into ourselves and unlease our own giftedness. We are always concerned about unleashing our students' giftedness. What about ours? Can we not also be creative? If we attend to these challenges, it will enhance the field of education for the gifted and cause us to grow. And those of you who know organizational theory know the importance of restructuring and renewal.

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HISPANIC AND GIFTED/TALENTED: CAN YOU BE BOTH?

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Can a student in our American educational system be both a bilingual Hispanic and gifted? Of course!

Advocates of bilingual gifted students believe that we must appreciate a student's high academic performance capabilities while simultaneously valuing his or her competency in listening, speaking, reading, or writing a second language. Unfortunately, many educators overlook gifted learners who are culturally different because they do not neatly fulfill the requirements for identification and placement into gifted programs. Sometimes assumptions are made that children who demonstrate verbal competency in a language other than English do not have superior cognitive ability. Such assumptions must be addressed when developing and implementing programs for bilingual gifted students.

A Case for Developing America's Talent, the U.S. Department of Education (1993) report on gifted education, noted the underrepresentation of bilingual students in programs for the gifted. The talents of disadvantaged and minority children have been especially neglected. Most programs for these particular children focus on solving the problems they bring to school, rather than on challenging them to develop their strengths. This article proposes some strategies for the assessment of bilingual children as well as curricular and program strategies to help teachers and students.

Assessment of Bilingual Children

Traditionally bilingual students have been significantly under represented in programs for the gifted, although an estimated 3 to 5 percent of the Hispanic population are gifted and talented (Martinson, 1974). In order for educators to find this "untapped talent," it is pertinent to plan and develop an evaluation design for determining effective practices to be used with bilingual population.

The first step is identification of bilingual gifted students' talents, using instruments that are sensitive to abilities and potential. First, collect and analyze non-test data. Educators should be trained to use *Frasier's Talent Assessment Profile* (1990). It provides a visual profile of the student's strengths and weaknesses.

A second recommendation is the use of a portfolio or case study procedure to identify potential. Elements of the portfolio or case study should include information such as a checklist of behaviors identifying bilingual students with high potential, home data such as parent interviews, an informal language assessment that measures the quantity and quality of functional communication competencies at home and school, set ratings and a dialogue journal between the teacher and student that emphasizes communication and meaning over spelling and grammar (Robisheauz and Banbury, 1994).

A third recommendation is the selection of appropriate IQ tests and/or achievement tests. The *Raven Progressive Matrices* is highly recommended for bilingual students because it is a non-verbal intelligence test. Achievement tests should be administered int he student's dominant language. Spanish achievement tests, such as *Prueba, Aprenda*, and *SABE* are widely used in bilingual programs for determining cognitive abilities in language and mathematics.

Other instruments to consider are the *Structure of the Intellect (*SOI) and *Torrance Tests of Creativity*. The SOI provides information on 26 different abilities that show where the gifts are, whether there are any abilities in need of being developed, and how the near-gifted can become gifted. The *Torrance Tests of Creativity* are also highly recommended as research suggests that culturally diverse students possess many traits that fall under the creative characteristics related to that particular area of giftedness .

Characteristics of Culturally Diverse Students

Behaviors of the culturally diverse may reflect creativity in various ways. Thomson and Cisternas (1981) suggest that code switching, or the mixing of two languages in a creative way to enhance communication, may be characteristic of giftedness. Lara (1994) suggests that the ability to acquire a second language with ease is another characteristic of gifted children that is often overlooked if a district does not value the native language and culture of the child.

Torrance (1979) suggests that there are many characteristics of gifted students that are consistent among culturally diverse students as well. These include the ability to express feelings and emotion, to improvise with commonplace materials and objects, to articulate well in role playing and story telling and to demonstrate persistence and creativity in problem solving.

Curricular and Program Strategies

Teachers

Bilingual educators need to be trained to assist in the data collection, analysis, and evaluation of potentially gifted bilingual students. This training should address the students' intellectual, creative, affective, and linguistic needs of the culturally diverse students. Teachers of gifted bilingual students must also possess specific skills in order to communicate effectively with them. Those skills identified (Kito and Lowe 1975) as necessary for effective communication include a knowledge of the individual's culture, an awareness of situations which may be culturally sensitive and knowing how to respond appropriately in such situations.

Although proficiency in the students' language(s) is not a requirement for teachers of bilingual gifted students, it is certainly beneficial. Teachers need to be sensitive to cultural issues as well. Torrance (1975) strongly promotes the concept of students teaching teachers about their culture through informal sharing experiences. Teachers should also be aware that although gifted bilingual students may be highly articulate in their native language, they may not be at a stage where they are able to exhibit that same ability in their second language (Valencia, 1985). Therefore, the curriculum should be differentiated according to the specific needs of the students in order for them to be successful.

Students

In order for students to succeed in school, they must understand academic material. Therefore, they should be provided with the appropriate support system for expanding their experiences. Culturally diverse students bring background knowledge to school that should be valued and utilized to expose students to diverse points of view. Assess the student's ability to think critically and creatively and solve problems in their native language. Failure to maintain and continue the development of the primary language during the second language acquisition can result in the loss of the primary language. Students also need to be allowed to refer to concrete materials, paraphrase, repeat key points, and act out meanings as needed. Children from culturally divers, linguistically different, and economically disadvantaged populations tend to learn better by experimenting and testing a variety of alternatives (Kolesinski, 1991).

Cooperative learning is another strategy that provides bilingual gifted students with the opportunity to practice a second language while interacting with their peers. By requiring that all group members participate, all students will have the opportu--nity to share in the success of the project. Allowing students to share real life issues and bring in related products that are relevant to them, stimulates the student and offer opportunities to explore and incorporate cultural values in the classroom setting. (Renzulli & Reis, 1985).

Gifted children often excel in their ability to acquire and develop concepts faster than average children. Therefore, allowing bilingual gifted students to work on some problems without necessarily providing verbal explanations would allow them to express themselves without the language acting as a barrier (Frasier, 1978). In order for bilingual gifted students to be successful, they should be given the option to pursue their areas of interest in either their native language or English (when appropriate). Resources should be made available to them so they are provided the same opportunities as English proficient G/T students have.

Conclusion

It is imperative that educators understand that by adopting the strategies normally used with gifted students, bilingual gifted students can develop skills and competencies that are transferable across languages. Educators need to utilize better methods of evaluating students' abilities to think critically and creatively and solve problems in more than one language. We must emphasize the development of strengths rather than focus on their deficiencies and allow students to develop through their strengths. This will mean that many traditional gifted programs will need to be reevaluated in order to maximize the talents of bilingual gifted students.

American education is now at a turning point. It requires us to reach beyond current practices and strive for excellence in education for all students, especially our bilingual gifted children. We must support projects working to develop talent in diverse populations and eliminated barriers to participation in programs for students with outstanding talents. Bilingual gifted students who are identified and encouraged to develop their linguistic, intellectual, creative, and leadership abilities, can provide an immense pool of future leaders.

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(See RENDON, pg.12)

The Education of a Gifted Non-English Speaking Immigrant

Becky Alanis
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Recent immigrants to America with little or no prior school experience are a group from whom we seldom notice or find potentially gifted children. Our legitimate concern with their language and cultural adaptation often causes us to overlook gifted behaviors. The evidence is there if we take the time to look, are willing to make referrals and have a school that provides procedures for assessing the talent of these children. Our recent experience at the Fort Stockton Intermediate School with placing a Limited English Proficiency (LEP), monolingual Spanish-speaking student in our gifted program may help others who find themselves in this situation.

Upon entering our school, Pam was placed in a multi-age, multi-level homeroom for recent immigrants with no prior schooling. I am a teacher in that program. During my first semester with her, I observed her inquisitive, verbal, and highly intelligent responses and inquiries. She wanted to know the how and why of every concept I presented. She often asked, "What if?" Most of the time she generated unusual or creative responses. I observed her lack of satisfaction with answers the teachers gave her and she challenged many of our explanations.

The behaviors and abilities Pam demonstrated were characteristic of gifted children. She was referred for testing and met the district's standards for placement in our gifted program. Her profile indicated several strengths, including a Matrix Analogies Test score above average for her peer group and teacher-recognized strengths in both math and language arts.

Placement in the regular gifted program was problematic. Both of the teachers were monolinguistic English speakers. We considered using me for her gifted instructor, but I was not certified for teaching gifted students. Our solution was to meet as a team of LEP and gifted education teachers. We planned modifications in her curriculum and instruction, including assigning a bilingual assistant to interpret her lessons in the gifted education classes and having that assistant available the period following the gifted classes for help with assignments. Pam was also allowed more time to complete her assignments as she would first do the work in Spanish and then work with her aide to translate the work into English. Eventually, Pam took complete responsibility for translation of the work she did.

I was able to provide additional help with Pam's English; for the first 12 weeks of school, she came to my house at night and on weekends for extra help. As the year progressed and her English proficiency increased, the amount of extra help she needed lessened.

The process of learning a new language and participating in gifted-level instruction was not easy for Pam. Early in the process, she became discouraged and wanted to quit. Her discouragement was not because she felt incapable of doing the work or of learning to understand English; rather, it came because she felt her extra school work kept her from labor required to help her family in their home.

As her teachers, we were sometimes exhausted by the process of developing the best education for this gifted child. It took extra time and effort on all our parts, but we have been rewarded for our efforts. Our compensation is Pam's academic performance and her increased self-esteem.

Through a lot of praise and encouragement, Pam is now successful and enthusiastic about her efforts and her classes. She is currently in her fourth six-week grading period and has maintained a 96% average in her gifted math and language arts classes. The cooperative planning we did between the LEP and gifted programs was very successful in addressing her needs and we are enthusiastic about her potential for even greater success. Gifted individuals exist in all populations if teachers take the time to look and work together to provide appropriate services linked to the student's strengths and needs. T

Discovering and Nurturing Talents in Hispanic Students

Marta Mountjoy
Garland ISD

Garland Independent School District is a suburb east of Dallas with 43,000 students in kindergarten through 12th grade. These students have the following ethnicity: 19% Hispanic, 14% African American, 5% Asian, .7% Native American, and 61% other. Until the 1994-95 school year, the gifted and talented program identified intellectually, academically, artistically, and musically talented students using typical assessment procedures and measures such as the *Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test* (K-BIT), the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* (ITBS) reading or math scores, the *Visual-Motor Integration Test* (VMI) and several informal assessments.

Identified students in elementary, middle, and high school received instruction in magnet schools. Participants were placed in homogeneous and heterogeneous classroom arrangements. Analysis of the ethnic configuration of these programs found the following representations: 2% Hispanic, 5% African American, 6% Asian, no Native American, and 87% other. The gifted program populaton did not reflect accurately the district's overall ethnicity.

Although the elementary bilingual teachers had occasionally referred potentially gifted Hispanic students, these students were seldom placed in the program. When these students were assessed using traditional achievement, ability and fine motor tests, they seldom obtained scores as high as the identified gifted students. This pattern of referral and nonacceptance was frustrating to teachers, parents, and students.

The search for an equitable solution to this problem became an ongoing concern. We heard about some exciting possibilities occurring in the Edgewood ISD from Dr. Cynthia Shade's presentation at a TAGT conference. She spent several hours at the conference and later visited our district. We used her ideas to modify our identification procedures in four ways: 1) focus more of the assessment on potential, creativity, and problem solving, 2) administer tests in Spanish to the bilingual referrals, 3) provide identified bilingual gifted students with a bilingual gifted class as an integral component of our magnet school program, and 4) develop and provide a summer enrichment program for bilingual gifted students.

Refocus Assessment on Potential, Creativity, and Problem Solving

To implement these modifications, we administered the *Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT)*, Figural Booklet A. We hoped this instrument would measure more accurately a bilingual student's ability to think, be divergent, and solve figural puzzles. *The Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary Students-Primary (SAGES-P)* was also added. The version we used was a Spanish translation of the SAGES-P provided by one author, Dr. Susan Johnson of Baylor University.

The *Matrix Analogies Test-Short Form* (MAT-S) as it was a nonverbal assessment of aptitude. The test requires no language, but directions can be given orally. The Garland Bilingual Education Coordinator translated these directions into Spanish. She also translated the directions for the TTCT and the VMI into Spanish. We retained the VMI from our previous assessment procedures.

We also found the Spanish version of the ITBS, the *Spanish Assessment of Basic Education* (SABE). We still used the mathematics and reading portion of the assessment.

Besides the nonverbal assessments and making the Spanish translations, we did specific training for all grade one bilingual teachers. Dr. Shade returned to our district and conducted five days of training on the characteristics and needs of gifted Hispanic children. She also described and explained the assessments we would be using later in the year for identification. Part of the time was spent developing and demonstrating classroom activities and materials.

The bilingual teachers learned to administer the assessments. They took the same tests their referred students would be taking as part of the training. The teachers practiced administering the tests. Dr. Shade monitored their practice.

During our initial year of the new assessment program, the grade one bilingual teachers gave the formal assessments to groups of four to six students while the district bilingual coordinator supervised the other children. The bilingual program evaluators scored the tests. Although this process was successful, we were uncomfortable with the consistency and quality of the testing.

The second year we gave the job of testing to the bilingual evaluators. They traveled to each campus

regularly to conduct other kinds of evaluations anyway. This past year we brought all nominated bilingual students together on the same Saturday we did general assessment for our gifted program. This seemed to provide a very efficient and reliable procedure.

Our experiences with the alternative assessments and procedures have been promising. We had an increase in first grade bilingual students who qualified for our program. The identified students' have outscored their peers and produced exceptional products since their participation the program began.

Bilingual Gifted Classes in the Elementary Magnet Schools

Once we identified the bilingual gifted children, we wanted to ensure their success in the magnet program. To accomplish this goal, we developed new bilingual gifted classes at the elementary magnet schools. We provide all of the magnet school publications in English or Spanish versions.

The bilingual gifted students remained in their bilingual homerooms for language arts and mathematics. They joined the other gifted magnet-school students for all other classes and school-wide enrichment activities. The bilingual gifted teacher, with the help of one aide, provided enriched and accelerated Spanish instruction. She worked with the students in large and small groups and used formats of instruction similar to those used by the other magnet school teachers.

During our second year, the second grade bilingual gifted students are integrated into even more classes and opportunities. They have acted as Spanish instructors for their English-speaking friends.

Summer Bilingual Gifted Opportunities

All nominated and selected bilingual students each year have the opportunity to attend a summer enrichment program at low or no cost. This component of our program was not part of the original Edgewood model.

The four-week program ran concurrently with our state required bilingual summer school. This allowed us to piggyback for transportation and use the elementary campuses. We did not incur any extra expenses for buses, drivers, building utilities, or administration.

The trained gifted and bilingual teachers designed the program. It was based on an interdisciplinary model with many hands-on activities in science, mathematics, and art. Classes focused on the development of creative and critical thinking skills, as well as English language acquisition skills. Throughout, we emphasized to the students that they were gifted and Hispanic; we hoped this helped them to see the fit between these ideas.

Funding for the classes and salaries came from the local bilingual gifted program budget, as well as the nominal fees some students paid to attend.

Conclusions

We are now in the second year of these program changes. In that time, the Hispanic makeup of our gifted program has increased from 2% to 3.5%. Many identified, bilingual students from the initial group of first graders selected are being mainstreamed into several regular, English-speaking magnet classes and extra-curricular activities.

The modest steps we have taken are just the first of several we hope to take. Future ideas include: training of all K-12 bilingual teachers in using thinking skills and other gifted techniques and materials in their classes; increased involvement of the parents of the bilingual gifted students in the magnet school PTA or as classroom volunteers or mentors; and increased community awareness concerning the existence and needs of bilingual gifted children.

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Just as important, by spending all day with intellectual peers, my daughter and her classmates have learned that their brain power is not only admirable, but something to revel in. This is a rare and wonderful lesson in a community that hands out trophies for sports, but not for schoolwork. So is the corollary: that intelligence, like the muscles of a powerful swimmer, can be exercised and stretched, so that all kids can achieve their personal best.

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The Dumbing Down of Gifted Children

Robin Marantz Henig

Last summer, I ran into my neighbor when I dropped by the pool for an evening swim. She was sitting in the slanting sunshine, a closed paperback on her lap, as she and the other swim-team mothers waited for practice to end.

I asked how her sons were enjoying the summer and she told me how well they were doing on the team. She even told me their best lap times, in seconds, down to the hundredths. This was not bragging, simply the way things are around here. Yet when she asked about my daughters, I didn't tell her that both had been accepted for the highly selective academic programs in their respective schools. This is also the way things are around here.

My neigbor and I are products of our national ambivalence about abilty: it's O.K. to extol athletic excellence, but there's something elitist, or at least unseemly, about even acknowledging intellectual excellence.

The notion of intellectual accomplishment, as opposed to performance in other spheres, must be uniquely threatening to the American egalitarian spirit. How else to explain the offensive attitude of many public schools - the very places where academic achievement should be cultivated and celebrated - toward our brightest children?

School officials seem to make decisions based on the belief that no child is smarter than any other child. But of course some are smarter, just as some are better athletes or musicians. The school system's lie hurts everyone, but especially the kids with the greatest intellectual promise.

When the boy across the street asked for harder work in sixth-grade math, he was told he couldn't get too far ahead of the rest of the class - it would run counter to the school's group-orieted philosophy. Yet he was capable of working at an eighth-grade level or higher, while some kids in his class were still mastering third-grade skills. What perverse logic would force him to tread water for an entire year so as not to outdistance the others? If he were a 12-year-old Michael Jordan, would his coach caution him not to make too many baskets so the others would have the chance to score?

Very bright kids are a victim of "heterogeneous classrooms," which lump together children who perform at, above and below grade level. My own daughters, now 10 and 14, wasted a lot of time in heterogeneous classrooms while the lesson was repeated again and again until everyone got it.

When my younger daughter was in third grade, the teacher said she wouldn't call on her when she raised her hand because the teacher knew she knew the answer. So my daughter sat quietly, trying hard to focus on the lesson even though she couldn't participate. Expecting her to bloom intellectually in such a setting is like expecting the young Jordan to get better at basketball just by showing up at a gym.

My older daugheter suffered similarly until in fifth grade she moved to a homogeneous class, one of the few our school system still grudgingly offers. Finally, she could learn something each day that she didn't already know. "It's perfect - I love it - everyone's like me," she said after her first day. They weren't, really; they were white and black and Indian and Chinese and Hispanic and Sri Lankan. But because they were all so smart, they were all equal.

This brings us to the real paradox. When all abilities and races are thrown together, the result is not always the idealistic rainbow-hued melting pot we wish it to be. All too often what emerges from those great stews of heterogeneity is the dissonant stirrings of racism.

In my younger daughter's mixed-ability third grade class, most of the children working below grade level were Black and Hispanic. This was obvious to anyone in the room, including the children. No one talked about it, though, so no one helped the children grapple with the complicated questions of how much of the split could be traced to some inherent racial differnce and how much to a gumbo of external factors like income, family structure, attitude or culture.

The unspoken lesson my daughter took away from the heterogeneous classroom was not one of tolerance and understanding. It was that the lowest achieving students - for whatever reason- tended to be the minority kids.

The disturbing racism of my younger daughter's third-grade year eased once she got into a homogeneous class of high-achieving students. There she found many minority classmates who were just as smart as she was, leading her to the inescapable conclusion that intelligence has nothing to do with skin color.

(see HENIG, pg. 17)

Alternate Identification for Gifted African-Americans

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To understand the unique needs of gifted minorities, we must reevaluate our established methods of operating gifted programs. The ethnic and economic makeup of America today demands that programs to educate and train gifted students cross all economic and ethnic barriers (Goertz and Phemister, 1994). Through alternative testing procedures, we can identify more gifted minorities. This affords gifted programming to all school populations while recognizing cultural and ethnic diversity.

Gifted programming often overlooks the cultural diversity of students in schools. While Blacks represent an increasingly larger percentage of the total U. S. population (Ford and Feist, 1993), Blacks are often underrepresented in gifted programs.

Typically, a general intellectual ability model is used in the testing and identification of gifted learners. Students are screened using basic skills tests, such as the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* or the *California Achievement Test*. Additionally, programs usually administer ability or IQ tests (Eby and Smutny, 1990). The *Otis-Lennon School Ability Test*, the *Standford-Binet IV*, or the *Cognitive Abilities Test* are examples of these types of instruments.

Forty-four states, responding to a national survey on testing instruments used in the identification of gifted learners, used an IQ test. The exception was California, which banned the use of IQ tests in assessing Black learners (Patton, 1992). Intelligence tests measure distinct cognitive skills specific to Western Culture. Consequently, we overlook many minority students, especially Black children. The problem, as stated by Patton, is a lack of systematic well-defined logic for assessing and identifying gifts and talents among Black learners.

The misuse of standardized tests or bias of teachers or administrators may account for the underrepresentation of Hispanics and Blacks in programs for the gifted and talented (Bracey, 1992). Moreover, Blacks may remain unidentified because of cultural ignorance. Landau (1990) writes:

> It must be remembered, however, that giftedness is a relative concept, always relating to a certain frame of reference, not to international, national, or regional norms. This means that an outstanding, intelligent child in culturally deprived surroundings needs special encouragement for his needs although he or she is not outstanding in a more privileged environment (p. 67).

Alternative Testing Instruments

We can modify the procedures for identification to find culturally and economically diverse students. For example, identification should focus both on the diversity between populations and on the diversity within the populations. Data for placement should be gathered from multiple sources, both objective and subjective. Attention should be given to the varying ways in which children from different cultures manifest behavioral indicators of giftedness (Clark, 1992).

An example of an alternative testing instrument is the *Abbreviated Binet for Disadvantaged*. This instrument is a modification of the *Standford Binet IV* intelligence test. Economically disadvantaged children who are gifted show patterns of strengths different from those focused on in regular IQ tests. Visual and auditory content, memory, convergent production in practical problem-solving situations, fluency of ideas, spontaneous categorization of spatial items, and awareness of natural relationships are a few of the strengths shown by gifted Black-Americans (Clark, 1992; Clendening and Davies, 1980).

Another test that measures many characteristics of minority children is the *Raven Standard Progressive Matrices*. The Progressive Matrices test was developed to measure ability without the scores being influenced by an individual's previous knowledge or education (Raven, Raven, and Court, 1993). The Ravens provides a series on nonverbal, nonacademic shape problems. Students' ability is determined by their ability to see patterns within the problems.

In assessing mental ability, the *Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children* (K-ABC) has been effective in evaluating minority students. Blacks, as a group, have scored higher on the K-ABC than on more traditional intelligence tests (Patton, 1992). The K-ABC focuses on process rather than content. It deemphasizes factual knowledge and applied school-related skills. This makes the test useful in assessing the intelligence and achievement for all children especially gifted minority children and gifted children with learning problems (Clark, 1992).

Divergent thinking is often defined as fluent, flexible, original, and elaborative thinking abilities. These skills are not measured easily with traditional aptitude or achievement assessments. The administration of a test for divergent thinking is beneficial in identifying gifted and talented Blacks, especially when their gifts and talents do no manifest themselves using standard testing procedures. The *Torrance Test of Creative Thinking*, measures divergent thinking, an important dimension of giftedness. It does so in a culture-fair way.

Important Considerations

There are two significant needs for bringing more gifted minority students into gifted programs (Weaver, Dandridge, and Matthew, 1993). First, we need measures that increase the representation of economically disadvantaged and culturally diverse children. Additionally, there is a need for appropriate programming and support services. These services would address the cognitive and affective needs of gifted children once they have been identified. Furthermore, if the under-representation of culturally different groups is a reflection of biases in the identification process, then careful study is necessary to find out if the breakdown is in the referral process, in the assessment process, or both (Scott, Perou, Urgano, Hogan, and Gold, 1992).

In creating a plan for identifying gifted and talented Blacks, careful consideration should be given to understanding the cultural diversity that exists within this group. Too often, gifted minorities find themselves between a rock and a hard place when cultural expectations of their indigenous groups are in conflict with those of the dominant group (Ford, Harris, & Schuerger, 1993, p. 409). Indeed, Blacks differ from other sociocultural groups culturally, philosophically, and spiritually. Therefore, the testing instruments used should reflect this distinct diversity. In addition, effective learning environments could help to develop gifts and talents in Blacks.

One administrative model effective in including many gifted individuals is Renzulli's *School Wide Enrichment-Revolving Door Model*. With a Talent Pool, up to 20% of a school's population are provided with performance-based learning situations in the regular classroom. Based on their interest in particular topics or problem areas, participants revolve into or out of advanced-level experiences.

Another approach is addressing the specific aptitude model of individual students. This means matching the strengths and talents of an individual student with appropriate program options for that child. Math is the most frequent aptitude addressed. Additionally, literature/ writing programs, science options, or music and art programs are offered in some schools. This approach benefits minority students who display talent in a specific area, but do not have elevated performance in all subject areas.

The application of alternate testing and identification procedures will increase the placement of culturally and ethnically diverse students, such as Blacks, in gifted programs. Placement can afford an education that prepares them for the future. It also better equips them with the tools necessary for success.

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